United Nations A/62/178

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 August 2007

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Item 65 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Advancement of women: implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/45, the present report provides information on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women by examining the extent to which intergovernmental bodies have paid attention to gender perspectives in their work. The report also assesses, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/9, the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women to discussions within the United Nations system.

* A/62/150

07-44726 (E) 230807

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/145, requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to the Assembly, under the agenda item "Advancement of women", as well as to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, with an assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and recommendations on further measures to enhance implementation.

2. The Economic and Social Council, in paragraph 19 of its resolution 2006/9, requested the Secretary-General to include in the annual report to the General Assembly entitled "Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly" and the annual report to the Economic and Social Council on the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, an assessment of the impact of the Commission's input to discussions within the United Nations system. An assessment carried out in compliance with that request was contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the Council entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system" (E/2007/64).

3. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women form a three-tier mechanism responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Reports on gender mainstreaming are submitted to those three bodies on an annual basis. Reports submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women focus on the progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes in relation to the priority theme under consideration by the Commission at each annual session. Reports to the Economic and Social Council examine the initiatives being undertaken by the entities of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into policies and programmes, and reports to the General Assembly focus on the attention given to gender equality in the intergovernmental processes.[1]

4. The present report examines the extent to which intergovernmental bodies have paid attention to gender perspectives in their work, focusing on the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the 2006 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.[2] The report also assesses the impact of the Commission's input to discussions within

[1] For example, E/2007/64 and E/CN.6/2007/3.

[2] The period under review for the preparation of the report is September 2006 to May 2007. Information on the Economic and Social Council was drawn from its 2006 report to the General Assembly, reports to its segments and the 2006 reports of its functional commissions. Information on the General Assembly and its committees was drawn from reports and notes of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, reports of high-level meetings and reviews, and resolutions and decisions.

the United Nations system, on the basis of inputs received from United Nations entities.

II. Attention to gender equality in the intergovernmental processes

A. Sixty-first session of the General Assembly

5. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly remain the guiding policy frameworks for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Assembly plays a critical role in advancing the global policy agenda and in furthering its implementation. An overview of selected documentation and outcomes of the Assembly during the sixty-first session, including in the follow-up to major international conferences and summits, high-level dialogues and informal thematic discussions, indicates that attention to gender equality was incorporated across a wide range of policy areas.

1. Work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees

6. During its sixty-first session, the Third Committee of the General Assembly paid specific attention to gender equality under the agenda item "Advancement of women", including in the areas of violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system,[3] and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Assembly and its Main Committees also incorporated a gender perspective into a wide range of policy areas under other agenda items. Attention to gender equality was included in the areas of, inter alia, human rights, economic development, sustainable development, poverty, education and training, and situations of conflict and humanitarian emergencies.

7. The present section provides some illustrative examples of means by which the General Assembly advanced the policy agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women during its sixty-first session. It highlights the advances made by the Assembly with respect to gender equality in four key policy areas: elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls; human rights; promotion of the gender mainstreaming strategy; and empowerment of women.

Violence against women and girls

8. During its sixty-first session, the General Assembly significantly advanced the global policy agenda on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including in the context of emergency humanitarian assistance.[4] Following the consideration of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1), the Assembly adopted resolution 61/143,

[3] The report of the Secretary-General (A/61/318) noted the lack of progress, even regression, since the previous year's report on meeting the gender balance targets of the Organization. The report reiterated the need, in order to redress the situation, for departmental accountability for gender balance, particularly at the level of programme managers.

[4] See, for example, resolution 61/132.

entitled "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women". The resolution, which was the result of extensive discussions and negotiations on the study and its recommendations, provided a strong platform for enhanced action on violence against women at the national level and within the United Nations. It urged Member States to exercise leadership and to devise systematic, comprehensive, multisectoral and sustained approaches, adequately supported and facilitated by strong institutional mechanisms and financing, to eliminate all forms of violence against women. It called for the systematic collection of data; the integration of a gender perspective in appropriately resourced and regularly monitored national plans of action and in national development plans and poverty eradication strategies; the establishment of specific national plans of action on the elimination of violence against women; and the development of diverse strategies that take into account the intersection of gender with other factors.

9. Resolution 61/143 strengthened the mainstreaming of attention to violence against women in other intergovernmental processes by inviting the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and other relevant United Nations bodies to discuss, by 2008, within their respective mandates, the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations and to set priorities for addressing the issue in their future efforts and work programmes.

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/146, entitled "Rights of the child", expressed profound concern that the critical situation of children globally was due partly to the persistence of gender inequality, and reaffirmed the need to apply the gender mainstreaming strategy to all child-related policies and programmes. It called upon States to address the gender dimensions of all forms of violence against children, to take all measures necessary to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against the girl child, and to incorporate a gender perspective in protection-related policies and actions. The resolution reflected the analysis and recommendations for action contained in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children,[5] the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children" (A/61/270) and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/61/275 and Corr.1).

11. In its consideration of the issue of trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly recognized the special vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking, the links between gender discrimination and trafficking, and the need for increased gender sensitivity in all efforts to fight trafficking and protect victims. Assembly resolution 61/144 called on Governments to pay particular attention to the needs of women and girls in devising, enforcing and strengthening gender-sensitive measures to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls, and in the treatment of victims of trafficking, including through intensified collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

12. Building on the recommendations on gender-based violence contained in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/61/85), the General

[5] Transmitted to the Assembly in a note by the Secretary-General on rights of the child (A/61/299).

Assembly noted with grave concern that violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children, continued to be deliberately directed against civilian populations in many emergency situations. In its resolution 61/134, the Assembly urged Member States to take effective measures to address gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies and to make all possible efforts to ensure that their laws and institutions were adequate to prevent, promptly investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence.

Human rights

13. The General Assembly also devoted considerable attention to the rights of women and girls and called for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the promotion of human rights in all areas, including in relation to persons with disabilities; the right to food; extreme poverty; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and unilateral coercive measures.[6] In addition, the Assembly paid explicit attention to women's human rights in some of its resolutions on the situation of human rights in specific countries.[7] The following paragraphs provide examples of the efforts of the Assembly to increase the attention given to the rights of women and girls.

14. In a landmark decision, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by its resolution 61/106, which, in its guiding principles (article 3 (g)), recognized the equality of women and men. The Convention emphasized the need to incorporate a gender perspective in all efforts to promote the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities and recognized that women and girls with disabilities were often at greater risk, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation. In its article 6, on women with disabilities, the Convention called on States parties to recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and in that regard to take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Specific attention to gender perspectives was also given in article 16, on freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse; article 25, on health; and article 28, on an adequate standard of living and social protection.

15. In its resolution 61/207, entitled "Role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence", the General Assembly noted that particular attention must be given, in the context of globalization, to the objective of protecting, promoting and enhancing the rights and welfare of women and girls, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Assembly stressed that, in the increasingly globalizing, interdependent world economy, it was essential to take a holistic approach to the interconnected national, international and systemic challenges of financing for development, namely, sustainable, gender-sensitive and people-centred development.

16. The General Assembly expressed concern that because of gender inequality and discrimination, women and girls were disproportionately affected by hunger, food insecurity and poverty. In its resolution 61/163, entitled "The right to food", it

[6] See, for example, resolutions 61/157, 61/161, 61/169, 61/170 and 61/173.

[7] See, for example, resolutions 61/18, 61/116, 61/154, 61/174, 61/176 and 61/232.

encouraged all States to address gender inequality and discrimination against women, to guarantee women's equal realization of the right to food, and to ensure that women had equal access to the necessary resources to ensure their food security and that of their families. It also encouraged the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the right to food to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective in the fulfilment of his mandate, and encouraged other United Nations bodies and mechanisms to integrate a gender perspective into their relevant policies, programmes and activities.

17. Recommendations to mainstream a gender perspective in the field of human rights were also made by the General Assembly in the areas of, inter alia, discrimination based on religion and belief, torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia and related intolerance.[8] For example, in its resolution 61/161, entitled "Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief", the Assembly urged States to devote particular attention to practices that violated the human rights of women and discriminated against them, including in the exercise of their right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. The Assembly also stressed the need for the Special Rapporteur to continue to apply a gender perspective, inter alia, through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process including in information collection and in recommendations.

Gender mainstreaming

18. The General Assembly advanced the gender mainstreaming strategy in a number of other areas, including, inter alia, cooperation against the world drug problem, assistance to refugees, natural disasters and disaster risk reduction, and the international financial system and development.[9]

19. Building on the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction" (A/61/229 and Corr.1), the General Assembly noted that women's needs, concerns and contributions to disaster risk reduction were often still neglected and that Governments and organizations needed to step up their promotion of gender mainstreaming and women's participation in decision-making in disaster-risk-reduction initiatives. Resolution 61/200, entitled "Natural disasters and vulnerability" and resolution 61/198, entitled "International Strategy for Disaster Reduction", recognized, respectively, the importance of gender mainstreaming and of increased participation by women, and the importance of integrating a gender perspective as well as of engaging women in the design and implementation of all phases of disaster management, particularly at the disaster-risk-reduction stage.

20. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/183, entitled "International cooperation against the world drug problem", urged States to consider strengthening and implementing broadly based prevention and treatment programmes and to ensure that such programmes adequately addressed the gender-specific barriers that limit access for young girls and women.

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[8] See also, for example, resolutions 61/148, 61/149 and 61/153.

[9] See, for example, resolutions 61/137, 61/187, 61/198 and 61/200.

Empowerment of women

21. The General Assembly advanced the issue of women's empowerment in several policy areas, including sport, microcredit and microfinance, social development, literacy, industrial development cooperation and capacity-building of older women for poverty eradication.[10] For example, in resolution 61/10, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace", the Assembly noted that sport and physical education provided opportunities to promote gender equality and invited Member States to initiate sports programmes to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

22. Another instance in which the General Assembly highlighted the empowerment of women was resolution 61/214, entitled "Role of microcredit and microfinance in the eradication of poverty". The Assembly recognized that microfinance, including microcredit programmes, had succeeded in generating productive self-employment and had proved to be an effective tool in assisting people in overcoming poverty and reducing their vulnerability to crisis, leading to their growing participation, in particular on the part of women, in the mainstream economic and political processes of society. It called upon Member States, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders to fully maximize the role of microfinance tools, including microcredit for poverty eradication and especially for the empowerment of women.

23. In following up on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development in its resolution 61/141, the General Assembly reaffirmed the commitment to the empowerment of women and gender equality and to strengthening of policies and programmes that improve, ensure and broaden the full participation of women, as equal partners, in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life. The Assembly reaffirmed the commitment to improving women's access to resources and to removing persistent barriers to the full exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The responsibility of the private sector to take into account the gender implications of its activities at all levels was underlined, and the Assembly reaffirmed the urgent need to create opportunities for men and women to obtain equitable productive work.

Assessment of gender mainstreaming in documentation for and outcomes of the Assembly

24. The General Assembly adopted resolution 61/145, it which it requested that reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies should systematically address gender perspectives through qualitative gender analysis and, where available, quantitative data, in particular through concrete conclusions and recommendations for further action on gender equality and the advancement of women, in order to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development.

25. The assessment of reports and notes of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly and its Main Committees indicated an imbalance in the extent to which qualitative gender analysis, quantitative data and concrete recommendations for further action had been incorporated. There is a need to further strengthen the attention given to gender equality in reports submitted to the Assembly in order to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development and promote the full implementation

[10] See, for example, 61/140, 61/142 and 61/215.

of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly.

26. Reports before the General Assembly, especially those submitted to the Second and Third Committees, devoted attention to gender equality by including gender analysis in the body of the report, and/or by providing recommendations for action. In some cases during the period under review, the inclusion of attention to gender perspectives or recommendations in such documentation directly informed the policymaking work of the Assembly and was translated into action-oriented outcomes. Resolutions of the Assembly did not, however, always include attention to gender perspectives, even when analysis and recommendations had been included in the reports submitted by the Secretary-General.[11]

27. Of the 298 resolutions adopted during the sixty-first session analysed for the present report, 69 — nearly one quarter — devoted attention to gender perspectives.[12] Greater attention was paid to gender perspectives in outcomes of the Third Committee (social, cultural and humanitarian issues) than in those of any other committee, in particular in relation to human rights, drug control, trafficking in persons, protection of migrants, ageing, social development, education, refugees, and returnees and displaced persons.[13] Two thirds of the resolutions adopted by the Third Committee drew attention to gender issues, with most calling for concrete action on the part of Member States and/or the United Nations system.

28. In the Second Committee (economic and financial issues), more than one third of all resolutions addressed gender equality, including in the areas of country-specific humanitarian assistance, poverty eradication and development, international migration, human settlements and natural disasters.[14] Approximately one third of plenary resolutions, or resolutions adopted without reference to a Main Committee, incorporated gender perspectives, including in the areas of international development and cooperation, humanitarian assistance, sport and persons with disabilities.[15] The First Committee (disarmament and international security issues), the Fourth Committee (special political and decolonization issues) and the Fifth Committee (administrative and budgetary issues) incorporated gender perspectives to a far more limited degree.[16] The Sixth Committee (legal issues) did not take gender perspectives into account in its outcomes.

[11] Notably, many reports presented to the Fifth Committee highlighted gender equality and the advancement of women in activities undertaken in United Nations peacekeeping operations. See, for example, A/61/715, A/61/724, A/61/733, A/61/741, A/61/764, A/61/766, A/61/767, A/61/773 and A/61/774.

[12] Figure includes resolutions available through 25 May 2007 only.

[13] See, for example, resolutions 61/137, 61/139, 61/140, 61/141, 61/142, 61/143, 61/144, 61/146, 61/148, 61/149, 61/153, 61/154, 61/157, 61/161, 61/163, 61/164, 61/165, 61/166, 61/169, 61/170, 61/173, 61/176, 61/177, 61/180, 61/183 and 61/232.

[14] See, for example, resolutions 61/187, 61/198, 61/200, 61/206, 61/207, 61/208, 61/213, 61/214, 61/215, 61/218, 61/219 and 61/220.

[15] See, for example, resolutions 61/5, 61/6, 61/10, 61/13, 61/14, 61/51, 61/106, 61/229, 61/230, 61/132 and 61/134.

[16] See, for example, resolutions 61/91, 61/119, 61/235 and 61/244.

2. Follow-up to major international conferences and summits, and high-level dialogues of the General Assembly

29. The General Assembly held a plenary meeting on the agenda item "Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session: implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" on 21 May 2007. The report of the Secretary-General before the Assembly, entitled "Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS: focus on progress over the past 12 months" (A/61/816), noted that increasing numbers of married women, in addition to girls and young women, were becoming infected, owing to, inter alia, harmful traditional practices, a lack of participation by women in decision-making processes, and gender-based violence. The need to accelerate interventions that addressed the drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including gender inequality, was highlighted. Although gender inequality had been identified as an obstacle to universal access in the national consultations held prior to the High-level Meeting on AIDS, the report noted that promotion of gender equality had not been incorporated as a central component in national AIDS plans. Funding and programming for the promotion of gender equality remained insufficient. Programmatic responses for the promotion of gender equality in responses to HIV had not been prioritized despite the commitments made.

30. During the meeting, the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and representatives of Member States discussed the increasing feminization of the epidemic and the importance of gender-sensitive policy responses.[17] Gender inequality was cited as a driver of the epidemic and an obstacle to universal access to care and preventive service; discrimination and violence against women were also identified as root causes. It was noted that efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and capacity-building were needed.

31. A high-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 was held on 18 and 19 September 2006. The Assembly considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/173), which noted that countries had not yet made full use of women's potential contributions to development and that as a result women were not equal beneficiaries. The report called upon least developed countries to fully mainstream gender perspectives into development strategies, policies, programmes and projects across all age groups, sectors and levels of society, with the full participation of women in those processes, and to facilitate those activities through the use of gender-disaggregated data and information. The outcome of the discussion, resolution 61/1, did not devote attention to gender perspectives.

32. The General Assembly held a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development on 14 and 15 September 2006, during the sixtieth session of the Assembly. The gender dimensions of international migration were taken into account in the High-level Dialogue, as well as in outcomes of the Assembly on international migration and development and the protection of migrants. The President's summary of the High-level Dialogue (A/61/515) noted that about half of

[17] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first session, Plenary Meetings, 98th and 99th meetings* (A/61/PV.98 and 99).

all those who migrated internationally to improve their livelihoods were women and that for many women migration was a means of empowerment. The contribution of migrant women to development in both countries of origin and those of destination should be recognized and the entrepreneurial potential of female migrants supported. It was noted that migration also entailed risks that were often more serious for women than for men, especially when women were relegated to undesirable low-paying jobs. It was important, therefore, to adopt policies that addressed the particular circumstances and experiences of female migrants and reduced their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The General Assembly, in its discussion, took into account the summary of the High-level Panel on women and international migration organized by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session.

3. Informal thematic debate of the General Assembly on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women

33. The President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session held an informal thematic debate from 6 to 8 March 2007 to reinforce the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women as priority issues needing the continued attention of the Assembly. The debate, which included interactive panels on the role of women in decision-making at all levels and the economic empowerment of women, including through microfinance, was an opportunity to share views on actions, good practices and lessons learned; to discuss strategies for closing the gap between policy and implementation; and to renew political commitments to the full implementation of existing agreements. The informal debate strengthened the consensus on the need for gender equality to be seen as both an important goal and an essential precursor to political stability, peace and sustainable development. It reaffirmed that the empowerment of women was tied to the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, including, inter alia, fully resourced national mechanisms for the advancement of women, national policies and action plans and gender-responsive budgeting.

B. 2006 session of the Economic and Social Council

34. The Economic and Social Council continued to make efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into the work of its annual sessions, including in outcomes such as ministerial declarations, resolutions and agreed conclusions. During the 2006 session explicit attention was given to gender equality in all of the segments of the Council, with the exception of the coordination segment.

35. Since 2004, the Economic and Social Council has had a regular agenda item, "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system", under its general segment and has played a significant role in advancing the implementation of gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system. At its 2006 session, the Council recognized that training was critical for increasing the awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity of staff for mainstreaming gender perspectives in United Nations policies and programmes. Council resolution 2006/36 called upon all entities of the United Nations system to, inter alia, make specific commitments annually to gender mainstreaming training, including in core competence development, and ensure that all gender equality policies, strategies and action plans include such commitments.

36. The Ministerial Declaration of the Council's high-level segment, "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development", recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls were critical to the achievement of sustainable development and in the context of efforts to combat poverty, hunger and disease. It further reaffirmed the determination by ministers and heads of delegations to protect all women's human rights by, inter alia, ensuring equal access to full and productive employment and decent work. The need for consistent use of the gender mainstreaming strategy for the creation of an enabling environment for women's participation in development was also underlined.

37. Under the operational activities segment, the Economic and Social Council carried out the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and took note of the efforts made within entities of the United Nations system to mainstream a gender perspective and to pursue gender equality in their country programmes, planning instruments and sector-wide programmes. Through its resolution 2006/14, the Council requested the Secretary-General to assess the extent to which organizations of the United Nations system, within their organizational mandates, had mainstreamed a gender perspective in their country programmes, planning instruments and sector-wide programmes and articulated specific country-level goals and targets in that field, in accordance with national development strategies.

38. At its humanitarian affairs segment, the Council held a panel discussion on gender-based violence in humanitarian crises, which was welcomed in its resolution 2006/5, entitled "Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations". Panellists noted that gender-based violence had become an endemic feature of conflict and its aftermath that threatened to reach epidemic proportions. It was particularly prevalent during humanitarian emergencies, when civil populations were most vulnerable. Women and girls were identified as the principal victims of sexual violence during armed conflict and in other situations of violence, with rape increasingly used as a weapon of war. Responses to gender-based violence required effective measures by the United Nations and Member States to ensure accountability for such crimes, including effective investigation and prosecution to prevent future occurrences. Some speakers also highlighted the need to take gender equality and women's empowerment into account in responses to natural disasters. The importance of a multisectoral, coordinated response to gender-based violence was stressed.

Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

39. The Council has continued to encourage its functional commissions to fully integrate gender perspectives in their work (resolution 2004/4). Most functional commissions recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming in some areas of work during their 2006 sessions and called for specific action to address the concerns of women and girls within their respective mandates.

40. An analysis of the 2006 outcomes of the functional commissions[18] revealed that gender perspectives were taken into account in a range of policy areas, including population ageing; statistics; social development; substance abuse prevention and treatment; international migration; crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women; science and technology; forests; and the environment.

41. The Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs highlighted the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in issues under consideration during their respective sessions. The importance of addressing the gender dimensions of international migration was highlighted, for example, in the resolution on international migration adopted by the Commission on Population and Development (resolution 2006/2). It recognized that the increasing feminization of international migration required greater gender sensitivity in all policies and efforts related to the subject of international migration. Member States and relevant international organizations were urged to incorporate a gender perspective in all policies and programmes on international migration in order to, inter alia, reinforce the positive contributions that migrant women can make to the economic, social and human development of their countries of origin and their host countries.

42. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice also encouraged Member States, in resolution 2006/29, to promote an active and visible policy for integrating a gender perspective into the development and implementation of policies and programmes in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice in order to assist with the elimination of violence against women and girls. Participants at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in 2006, identified gender equality as one of the cross-cutting issues that needed to be addressed in discussions on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution and the atmosphere, and climate change.

43. The Commission for Social Development welcomed the incorporation of a gender perspective in the development of sectoral policy frameworks and programmes in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (resolution 2006/17). In the Baku Accord (resolution 2006/30), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs recommended that States members of its Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East continue to incorporate substance abuse prevention, treatment and health care into their national drug control strategies and socio-economic development programmes, especially programmes designed to enhance the social and economic empowerment of women.

44. Functional commissions also recognized the importance of increasing women's access to resources and enhancing their active participation. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development, for example, called on Governments to encourage young people to study science and technical subjects, taking into account gender balance, and to promote equitable access to science education at all levels, affordable access to information and communication technologies, and participation

[18] The Commission for Social Development, the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

in national science, technology and innovation systems.[19] The United Nations Forum on Forests urged countries to promote the active participation and empowerment of all forest-related stakeholders, especially local and forest-dependent communities, indigenous peoples, women and small-scale private forest owners and forest workers, in the development and implementation of sustainable forest management policies and programmes.

45. The Statistical Commission, in its resolution 37/109 on social statistics, noted the importance of analysing trends in the situation of women and men. It underscored the need for the development of concepts and methods relating to the assessment of gender differences in poverty and the measurement of violence against women and domestic violence. The Commission also pointed out the importance of ensuring, inter alia, collaboration with agencies responsible for the advancement of women and training on gender statistics for both producers and users.

C. Fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

46. The Commission on the Status of Women is the global policymaking body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. The Commission plays a critical role in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women worldwide, including through its catalytic role in promoting and monitoring implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy at the national level, in entities of the United Nations and in intergovernmental processes. The Commission also submits its agreed conclusions to relevant intergovernmental bodies or preparatory processes for follow-up to global conferences and summits.

47. The Commission plays an important catalytic role in support of gender mainstreaming. The new working methods of the Commission, adopted at its fiftieth session,[20] placed strong emphasis on accelerating national-level implementation of the Platform for Action, including through an interactive exchange of views on experiences, lessons learned, good practices and gaps and challenges relating to the themes under consideration. To enhance gender mainstreaming, one report of the Secretary-General will focus on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme. An interactive event will also focus specifically on capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in relation to the priority theme. In addition, the Commission will systematically review the progress made in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on priority themes from previous sessions.

48. In developing its multi-year programme of work, the Commission on the Status of Women, in selecting the priority themes, took into account the need for the coherent and coordinated implementation of major conferences and summit outcomes and the importance of ensuring that such outcomes informed critical

[19] The draft resolution on science and technology for development recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption was superseded by the resolution entitled "Follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development" (2006/46). Resolution 2006/46 did not contain any references to women or gender.

[20] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 7* (E/2006/27).

processes in other intergovernmental bodies. The Commission, in developing its work programme for 2007-2009, contained in resolution 2006/9 of the Economic and Social Council, chose the theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" for 2007 so as to allow the Commission to contribute to the follow-up of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, slated for 2007 — the fifth anniversary of the special session on "A world fit for children", which was organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

49. The theme "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women", to be considered in 2008, will allow the Commission to provide substantive input to the International Conference on Financing for Development to review implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in the second half of 2008. Consideration of the theme "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS" will allow the Commission to contribute to the follow-up of the comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, held on 31 May and 1 June 2006, and the High-level Meeting held on 2 June 2006, as well as to the work of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

50. The Commission continued to provide input to the discussions held in the context of other intergovernmental processes aimed at promoting gender mainstreaming in the development agenda and to submit its agreed conclusions to the relevant intergovernmental bodies or preparatory processes for follow-up to global conferences and summits.

51. At its fiftieth session, in 2006, the Commission held a high-level panel discussion on the gender dimensions of migration. The Chairperson's summary was transmitted, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.[21] It was recognized in the discussion that women's migration experiences were different from those of men, including in relation to exit and entry and in countries of destination. It emphasized that specific attention should be given to the empowerment of migrant women through migration policies and legislation. The General Assembly took the input of the Commission into consideration in its High-level Dialogue.

52. Members of the Commission attended the informal thematic debate of the General Assembly in March 2007 on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and contributed to the discussion based on the outcomes of its fiftieth session, in 2006, on enabling environments for women's empowerment and women's participation in decision-making.

Assessment of the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women to discussions in the United Nations system

53. In its resolution 61/145, the General Assembly encouraged all actors, inter alia, Governments, the United Nations system, other international organizations and civil society, to continue to support the work of the Commission in fulfilling its central role in the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the Beijing

[21] Ibid., chap. I, sect. A.

Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, and, as applicable, to carry out its recommendations where appropriate.

54. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/9, requested that the Secretary-General include in the present report an assessment of the impact of the Commission's input to discussions within the United Nations system.

55. At its fiftieth session, in 2006, the Commission adopted agreed conclusions on "Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work" and on "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels". The Commission called for follow-up action by all relevant stakeholders, including entities of the United Nations system.

56. An assessment of the impact of the Commission's input to discussions in the United Nations, in response to the request contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, was included in the report of the Secretary-General to the 2007 substantive session of the Council entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system" (E/2007/64). The report found that the agreed conclusions for both themes provided a new impetus to the work of United Nations entities in the following three areas: enhancement of their substantive activities at both the policy and operational level; promotion of advocacy and awareness-raising for gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially at the regional and national levels; and improvement of the status of women, including their representation within organizations.

57. In preparation for the present report, a number of United Nations entities submitted information on ways in which the Commission's outcomes in those two areas had affected their work.[22] The Department of Public Information, for example, has produced information kits on the outcomes of the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in relation to both priority themes and has engaged in outreach to regional and national media.

58. In following up on the agreed conclusions on "Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education,

[22] Contributions for preparation of this report were received from the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, the Division for the Advancement of Women, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNCTAD, the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, ECA, ILO, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, UNEP, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WHO, WFP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNAIDS, UNRWA, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, UNESCO, the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Department of Political Affairs, the Financing for Development Office, the Division for Development Policy and Analysis, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the International Organization for Migration, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Telecommunication Union and the World Bank.

health and work", several United Nations entities reported on steps taken to create an enabling environment through the development of policies and action plans. For example, the overall policies and plans of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) aimed to create, within their specific areas of work, an environment that promoted and sustained gender equality. The FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action (2008-2013) aimed to advance rural women's social and economic status and to reduce their vulnerability to poverty, and the UNEP Gender Plan of Action contained clear guidelines and timelines for the inclusion of gender perspectives in environmental policies and programmes.

59. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has built staff capacities in programmes and activities covered by the agreed conclusions. The International Trade Centre of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization (UNCTAD/WTO) has developed new methodologies and tools to support capacity to include gender perspectives in trade development work.

60. Programmatic actions taken at the national level to support the full implementation of the agreed conclusions included the establishment of multi-purpose community telecentres in rural and remote locations in Africa and Asia by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported training in gender-sensitive budgeting and the institutional strengthening of national machineries and gender focal points. In an effort to combat poverty, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has promoted capacity-building for girls and women in rural areas. The World Health Organization (WHO) has supported research on community interventions and on the negative health impacts of female genital mutilation on childbirth and neonatal health. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has set up a human rights observatory on the issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

61. A number of entities have provided specific support to combat HIV/AIDS. FAO supported the formulation of agricultural-sector strategies that take into account the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. In partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), FAO piloted Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, which targeted children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and other vulnerable youths with a view to improving their agricultural knowledge and skills. UNAIDS developed draft guidelines on expanding gender equality in national responses to HIV that focused on strengthening attention to gender equality in national AIDS planning, monitoring and evaluation processes and within national AIDS programmes.

62. Training was undertaken and workshops were held by entities to facilitate the creation of enabling environments in different areas. For example, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has provided technical assistance for training on gender issues, including advocacy for legislation, the implementation of laws and resource allocation in a number of regions. In the area of education and training, UNESCO has promoted the empowerment of women through education at all levels, not only in formal systems but also through literacy and non-formal educational programmes.

63. In following up on the agreed conclusions on "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels", a number of initiatives have been reported by United Nations entities. Some entities have focused on participation in elections. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat provided support for women's participation in elections in a number of countries and organized leadership training for women candidates running for electoral office. The UNESCO programme of research on women's rights for peace and security in post-conflict democracies in Africa has developed policy recommendations on women's rights and participation in decision-making to promote women's full participation in and contribution to peace and security.

64. Women's participation in local government was also given attention. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has focused on women in local governance in its work programme for 2006-2007. Programmes included sessions on elected women in local government and dialogues on women, democracy and local governance. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) have also paid special attention to women's participation in local governance.

65. Capacity-building was provided by a number of entities. UNDP has supported capacity-building to increase women's political leadership and facilitated women's participation in elections as voters and as candidates, advocating for women's political rights and affirmative action. UNFPA has also supported young women's self-empowerment through capacity development and skills-building in leadership, decision-making and consensus-building, including in family, couple, community and public life.

66. The importance of women's representation in international forums was also raised. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, has continued to ensure the participation of Palestinian women in its international meetings and conferences.

67. Entities reported on efforts to increase the participation of women in the work of the United Nations. The Department of Political Affairs has continued to submit names of highly qualified women for inclusion in the roster of potential candidates for senior-level United Nations positions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has appointed women in senior positions to promote the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

68. **Effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly require the incorporation of gender perspectives in social, political and economic development at all levels. It is important for intergovernmental bodies to examine systematically the gender dimensions of thematic issues under consideration in all policy areas to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development and to develop effective means of follow-up at the national level.**

69. Gender perspectives were integrated in approximately one quarter of the outcomes of the General Assembly, of which two thirds contained recommendations for action. The outcomes of the Third Committee, and to a lesser extent those of the Second Committee, continued to reflect gender perspectives in a more systematic manner than did the outcomes of other committees. Gender perspectives were given the greatest attention in outcomes dealing with social development and human rights, but received less attention in outcomes relating to economic and political issues. Further efforts could be made to examine the gender dimensions in areas such as disarmament and international security, administrative and budgetary matters and legal affairs.

70. While the attention to gender perspectives included in reports and notes of the Secretary-General submitted for consideration by the Assembly in some cases directly informed its policymaking work and was translated into action-oriented outcomes, reports did not systematically include gender analysis, related data or recommendations for action. Further efforts are needed to strengthen attention to gender equality in reports submitted to the Assembly to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development.

71. The Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions continued to make efforts to incorporate gender perspectives into their discussions and outcomes. Efforts are needed, however, to facilitate more systematic attention to gender perspectives in the work of all the functional commissions, including through increased consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women.

72. The Commission on the Status of Women continued to play a catalytic role in advancing gender mainstreaming at the national level, in the United Nations system and in intergovernmental processes. United Nations entities should more effectively utilize and report on the impact of the outcomes of the Commission.

73. The General Assembly may wish:

(a) To request that reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly facilitate gender-sensitive policy development by more systematically including qualitative gender analysis, data and concrete recommendations for further action;

(b) To encourage the subsidiary bodies of the Assembly to incorporate gender equality perspectives systematically in their discussions and outcomes, including through the more effective use of the analysis, data and recommendations contained in reports of the Secretary-General, and to follow up on the outcomes;

(c) To ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed in the implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in particular in the follow-up to the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, in 2007, and the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development, in Qatar in 2008, as well as in the third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, in Ghana in 2008;

(d) To request the Economic and Social Council to continue to encourage its functional commissions to mainstream a gender perspective in their

respective follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits and to develop more effective means of monitoring the implementation of outcomes on gender equality at the national level;

(e) To request the Commission on the Status of Women to enhance its catalytic role in promoting and monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming, including by systematically transmitting its outcomes to relevant stakeholders in the United Nations system for implementation and follow-up, including in intergovernmental processes;

(f) To request entities of the United Nations system to systematically incorporate the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women into their work where appropriate, and to report on the impact of the outcomes to enhance monitoring and evaluation of the effective use of such outcomes.